



SAINT FRANCIS
Hospital and Medical Center

Saint Francis/University of Connecticut
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Pediatric Clinic
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January 26, 2015

Good afternoon, Senator Bartolomeo, Representative Urban, and members of the Committee on Children,

My name is **Patricia Joyce, MD**. I am the director of the pediatric clinic jointly run by the University of Connecticut and St. Francis Hospital and Medical Center in the Burgdorf/Bank of America Health Center, located at 131 Coventry Street in the North End of Hartford. I have been providing care at Burgdorf for 33 years, and am now tending to my third generation of many families.

Today, I am writing in support of **Senate Bill 209, An Act Concerning Funding for the Reach Out and Read Program**. As the provider of care to children from the poorest neighborhood (Northeast, where >76% of families live at or below 200% of the poverty level) in the poorest city in Connecticut (and one of the poorest in the US), I know that Reach Out and Read is far more than a nice adjunct to the pediatric health care visit. It is a lifeline.

Many people are aware of the studies of early brain development that show the critical importance of making an early, and sustained, impact on the development of vocabulary and subsequent literacy skills. There is direct correlation between the frequency with which children are read to, and their acquisition of vocabulary.

What is less commonly known is that, now that we've been able to follow children through several decades and into adulthood, there has also been demonstrated a correlation with their earning potential. Children who were read to, and thereby developed an earlier, more extensive vocabulary, showed sustained academic advancement and subsequent dramatic increases in earning potential.

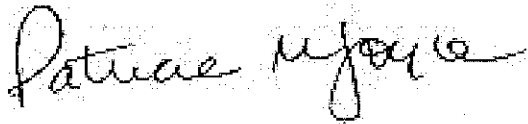
Reach Out and Read, which provides books to children coming for pediatric care (and these are, sometimes, the only books the family owns), does so with little infrastructure and great fiscal responsibility, through the purchase of large quantities of quality books at discounted costs. Thus, a relatively small investment on the part of the state in 2015 can be expected to have a dramatic effect on state spending (decreased reliance on assistance programs) and state income (increased earnings) within a generation.

As a tax payer, I see the passage of this bill as a necessary step in promoting the fiscal health of our state, not only now, but for the future. That kind of foresight is often sorely lacking in our approach to spending.

As a pediatrician, and especially one who has devoted an entire career to the care of the underserved, I view Reach Out and Read as the key to unlocking the potential within the young children in my practice. It is the means by which I can nurture their minds as well as their bodies. For far too many of them, life circumstance makes all of life that much more fragile. Reach Out and Read is critical to providing a step up and away from that life circumstance. I don't see how we can afford to be without it.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Patricia M. Joyce". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name and title.

Patricia M. Joyce, MD
Associate Professor, Pediatrics,
Associate Residency Program Director, Pediatrics
Pediatric Clinic Director
St. Francis/University of Connecticut Primary Care Services